

# Mary Edson: Playmate, 1947-1949

13 June 2016

Mary DePrisco  
900 Arbor Lake Drive, Unit 501  
Naples, FL 34110-8062

Mary -

I called my niece, Debbie Tipton Lyon, at Tower Pointe this evening and learned that you had an interesting conversation with her not too long ago. As I understand it, you had lived in the Naval Gun Factory in Washington, D.C. and had known our family, in particular, my sisters Patti (then Patsy) and Penny Blackledge.

If my understanding is correct in this, I am sure that my sisters would love to talk with you. Can you provide your years when you lived at the Naval Gun Factory and your maiden name, so Patti and Penny might be able to place you. You can reach me at email: [mike@blackledge.com](mailto:mike@blackledge.com) or my mailing address is provided in the header. I can provide their contact info as well.

Hoping to hear from you,

*Michael A. Blackledge*  
[mike@blackledge.com](mailto:mike@blackledge.com)  
[Lamar59.org](http://Lamar59.org)

*Jun 24 2016*

*Dear Mike,*

*I was pleased to receive your letter after talking to your niece, Debbie Lyon.*

*What a small world! I am the former Mary Edson and lived in Quarters E at the Gun Factory from the summer of '47 to the summer of '49. I had four older brothers, Steve, Jimmy, Peter, and Charles, and a younger sister, Alice. I am now 81 and I played with*

*Patsy and Penny who were a year younger than I.*

*I remember many good times at the swimming pool! I believe that when we moved there Steve was in the Navy and never lived at the Gun Factory.*

*Steve, Jimmy and Charles have passed away.*

*I married John McDonnell, class of '55 at USNA. He was center on the Navy basketball team, and later in his career had command of the USS Dolphin, the Navy's deepest diving submarine, and then had command of the Naval Oceanographic Office, and later the Naval Oceanography Command (Oceanography and meteorology combined). Unfortunately he died of cancer in 1984. In 1990 I christened the USNS John McDonnell, an oceanographic research ship, and just this month the ship which had been put out of commission by Obama was sold to a shipping company in Seattle and renamed the Sea Freeze! (awk!) I'm only telling you this because Debbie had said that you were a USNA graduate. My son, David McDonnell, is a USNA graduate also (class of '85) and now lives in Annapolis.*

*In 1992, I married Lou DePrisco, a chemist who managed explosive plants, and we moved to Naples, where we have lived since then. We moved to Arbor Trace in 2013, where we became friends with Dick Anderson, and after reading your sister Barbara's obituary, I perked up when I saw that she was the former Barbara Blackledge of the Naval Gun Factory.*

*I hadn't meant for this to be so long, but I don't too often get to talk to Navy friends. But one more tidbit: when I was first married I happened to be watching the Rose Bowl parade, and there were Patti and Penny as the queens. Small world!*

*Thanks for the note, Mike, and if you ever get back to Annapolis, please look up Dave. He's quite the party guy and was secretary of his class for several years and is a regular at tailgate parties.*

*Sincerely, Mary DePrisco*

---

*From: Mike Blackledge*

Mary -

So great to hear from you! Just last week, Penny told by email a story of the Naval Gun Factory, and ended it by saying, "Then I raced downstairs and outside to play with the Edsons, our next door neighbors." And here you are!

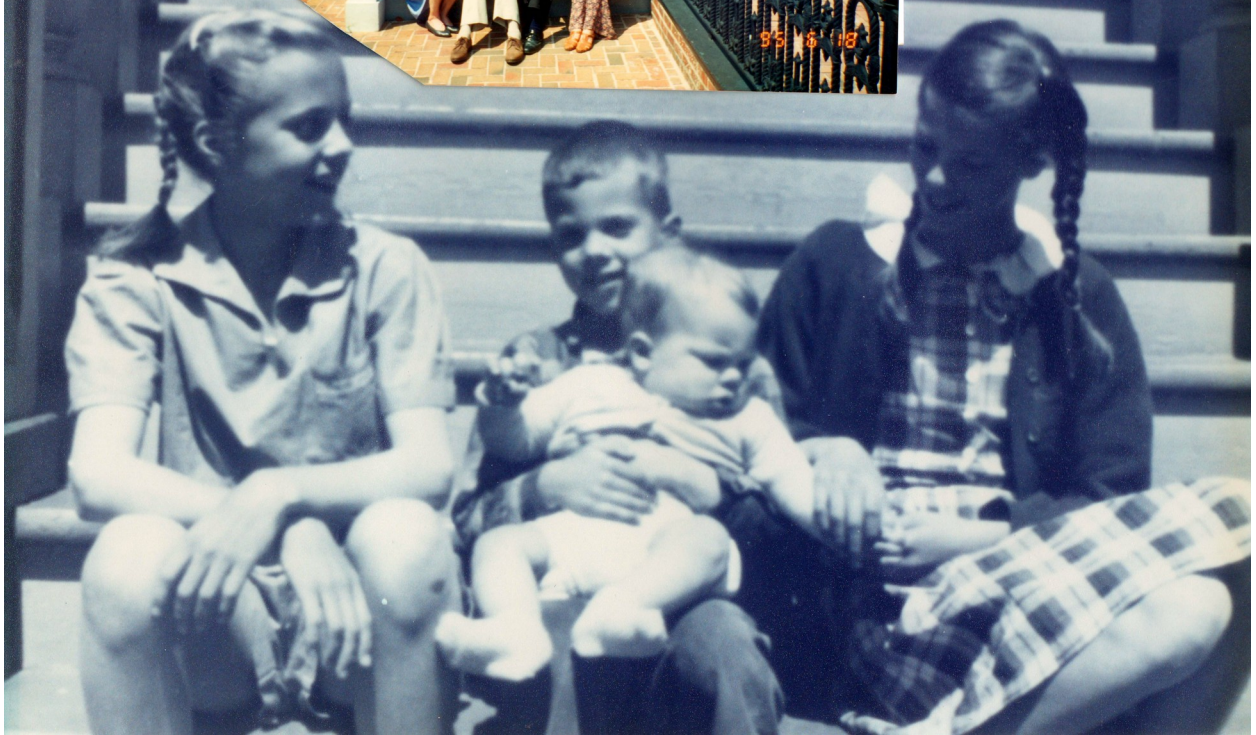
I have copied Penny (now prefers Penn) and Patti (via her husband Dick Blide). Your story is great, I will look forward to meeting your son in Annapolis. What an honor to have a ship named after your late husband.

Penn is on her yearly sojourn to Birmingham, England but does have email accessibility.

- Mike Blackledge

---

Penny, Mike and Peter, Patti Blackledge on the steps of  
Quarters D, Naval Gun Factory, Washington, D.C. c. 1948



Hi Mary Edson,

Just read the email you sent to my brother, Mike. I'm writing this from the UK where Fred and I (married 58 years) accompany a son, Nick, 47, a high-school English teacher in southern California, as he works on a long-distance Ph.D in theology at the U of Birmingham each summer.

I have such wonderful memories of you as a terrific and active friend for Patsy (now Patti) and me next door in Quarters "D" of the Naval Gun Factory. Your athletic attributes amazed us as well as your energy and good nature. You were a whizz at basketball and everything else.

There was nothing you could not do. You flew and excelled at all the sports. In fact, you introduced Patsy and Penny us to a "jock" style of athleticism. You were energetic, funny and otherwise memorable.

You also introduced us to your brothers and younger sister, Alice. I remember your mother, as a beautiful, slim, smart woman. I recall Steve as blue-eyed, handsome and quiet. I do not recall Jimmy. I remember Charles as a prankster sort with his own style of speaking, and I recall Pete as long and tall with a glint in his eye, ready to challenge with jokester tendencies.

How you managed with 4 older brothers is amazing in itself. I think it made you resilient and ready-to-defend-no-matter-what. I recall your sister Alice, wearing blue, as a smiley, demure and quiet brunette, taking after her mom. I'm sorry to learn that three of your older brothers have passed.

I also recall the interior of your Quarters "E" even though I may have seen it only once or twice. I remember the Roman Catholic icons and the fact that you were a family versed in the Bible and the Church. That was new to me. Now, our older son, 49, is a pastor in Sugar Land, Texas at Sugar Land Bible Church and also a professor at the nearby by College of Biblical Studies (CBS) in Houston, Texas. Both sons turned out to be 6 feet, 7 inches - which surprised us.

I'm writing to thank you for ingraining deep athletic memories into my brain. Fred and I, at 80 and 81, stay active here in the UK. We walk up to the Sports Centre from the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre (no, we are not Quakers, but Christians) most days (45 minutes), then either swim or gym before walking back. We are "aging well" and Fred is now retired (@ 80) from the California Appellate Court in Los Angeles so we make exercise a daily priority, (thanks in part to you!).

It was so nice to "hear from you" via the email to Mike. I just had to write and "say HI" and even though it was only a two-year "play-mate" relationship, it stayed with us, influenced our future life-style and showed us how strong and talented a female can be.

Long live Mary Edson!

Blessings, Penny Woods

*From: Mary Edson DePrisco 8 July 2016*

I am sorry that I have no pictures to share from the Gun Factory days. Good luck with your book! Mary